What Might Have Been

By Z. G. HOPKINS

Illustrated by Henry J. Hall

WE read so much, and hear so much, in these days of distinterested patriotism, of the real motives and actual movements of the men who have been mighty in history that we hardly know what to believe. In recent years, even the authenticity of a remark reputed to have been made concerning war by William Tecumseh Sherman has been questioned, although there has been little disposition in certain European countries, during the past fifteen months, to question the accuracy of the characterization with which General Sherman was credited.

When the writer went to school, along with his fellows in the elementary grades, he was stirred and uplifted by the record that came to the classes of the noble sentiments expressed and the brave deeds performed by the men who figure so largely in text books on American history. There may be room for difference of opinion as to the degree in which our subsequent careers have been molded by the sublime sentiments, expressed in the text books if not elsewhere, by Perry and Pinckney and Lawrence and other figures of pioneer days, but certainly it will be agreed that the text book versions of historical events had no bad effect on us. We might have been worse, and it pleases me to think that we are better ctizens, more patriotic and more imbued with a spirit of American ideals, for having believed all these years that Daniel Webster was duly sober, and moved only by a mighty and pure flame of patriotic devotion in his great oratorical flights.

But at that, it would not be at all surprising if some chap was to bob up to exploit proof that Patrick Henry never did express a preference for liberty. Indeed, the way things are going, we may rather expect something of the sort. But there is one American sovereign who is going to stand on his right to believe what he blame pleases about the folks who have gone before. And it pleases him to believe that the social structure for which they laid the foundation in America was the product of their virtues, that their faults were their personal affair, and that it is better that we take their records at their face value than that we take them to pieces.

Because after all, it is a grand thing for a people to have a heritage of lofty purpose and great accomplishment to live up to, and perhaps after all, there are things in history that we can learn too much about for our own good.

There is inspiration in history, if we don't go too deep. History is but the record of human events, and humans have been pretty much the same from the dawn of time down to this present day. When we dig deep, despite the epoch, we find motives and movements that it doesn't do us much good to contemplate. The more we view them, the less likely are we to fashion our conduct to conform to the high lights in history that have meant most to human progress. And so this writer likes to take the fine things in history at their face value, without paying too much attention to whether he has the correct version of a historical event, in all its details, if he has an inspiring idea of what transpired.

Take the story of the remark said to have been made by General Chaffee to the commanding officers of the allied military forces in China during the Boxer uprising. Question has been raised at times as to the accuracy of the story, but I hope it's true.

The advisability, from a military standpoint, of an advance, through a country swarming with millions of aroused and hostile Boxers, to the relief of Peking was was under consideration at a council of war. The English, German, Japanese and Russian ranking officers advised against such a movement, holding it to be impossible of successful result with the forces then available. The council was about to break up without a decision. Then General Chaffee is said to have given utterance to a sentiment—and I like to believe it is true—that should make the heart of every American swell with pride.

"Gentlemen," he said, "My orders from my government are to go to the relief of the American legation at Peking. My column will move at six o'clock tomorrow morning."

The American column did move at six o'clock "tomorrow morning" and the rest of the columns moved with it. There is no doubt of the result as history records it, and it will be a fine thing if Americans for all time to come assume that General Chaffee's course influenced the movement that brought the result. Such an assumption, if it be an assumption, will enrich the heritage of American boys and girls.

And now to the story I started to tell. The preface is intended only as protection against a possible flood of chaps who might desire to correct the details, or analyze the motives of the central figure, as they view his motives. It has to do with the climax of the political career of a great Kansan, in some respects the greatest Kansan in all the state's history, John J. Ingalls. For reasons personal to the writer, if for no others, only the name of Ingalls will be used in telling the story.

It was during the days of the Populist uprising of the early nineties. Ingalls was nearing the close of his third term as a United States Senator. The state senate elected two years previously, was Republican but the House of Representatives was overwhelmingly Populist. In the joint session, and there the senatorial choice was to be made, the Republicans were in a hopeless minority. Ingalls did not want to retire from the Senate. His political ambitions were unsatisfied, and he had made a bid for Populist votes for which many of his warmest friends have never forgiven him.

Ambitious Populists, with private notions that a senatorial toga would fit them, were plentiful. They were unable to agree among themselves, and the senatorial fight dragged on without prospect that the warring factions within the Populist party would get together. Ingalls, with some of his friends, held out hoping that "lightning might strike," and that with the solid Republican vote already his he might pick up enough Populist votes to win.

At this stage of the contest, a little knot of politicians, some of them Republicans and some of them Democrats, but all friends and admirers of Ingalls who believed that in view of his record and standing he would better represent the state than an unknown man, took a hand in the proceedings. The session had been long, and to some of the legislators on the majority side, expensive. Negotiations were undertaken to interest certain Populist members in the re-election of Ingalls. The negotiations were successful. Pledges were made that if certain financial considerations were met, enough Populist representatives would vote for Ingalls when the two branches of the legislature met in joint session the succeeding day to elect him, if he also polled the solid Republican strength. That he could secure the Republican votes was certain. The men who were engineering the plot were satisfied that the Populists party to the deal could deliver as promised, and the amount agreed [*Continued on page* 12